

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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CHAPTER XLII. SADNESS AND SORROW.

THE Professorin was certainly a very calming element in a sick-room. To look at her sitting there, with her grey knitting and her comfortable appearance, was not unduly exciting. Sibyl was certainly better, that is, the fever was less, and only returned towards night; but she was terribly weak. In the depth of her heart she really experienced a great sense of relief at having escaped that secret marriage with the Count; but to weigh against this she deeply regretted the good things of life which would have been hers if she were now a countess. Another thing she felt acutely was the fact of not having received one line from the Count—not even a message or a bunch of flowers; but she put this down to Grace. Of course Grace had told him not to write; she might even have said that her sister did not wish to receive a letter from him; and as Sibyl still fancied herself in love, she fretted over this in silence without daring to mention it. To-day she was well enough to be moved on to the sofa near the window; but this only looked into a cheerless garden, and Sibyl would not even take pleasure in watching the bees humming round the pear-trees, or the yellow butterflies flitting round each other.

Presently she saw a little note sticking out of a book of sermons which Grace usually read on Sundays, in remembrance of Nans religious views, which had

been always rather puritanically strict about the observance of Sunday. Sibyl looked at this little bit of paper a long time, and tried to read the word that was visible though upside down. She could not see whose writing it was; not Nans, for hers was big and bold. At last she turned towards the Professorin, who had gently dozed off over the grey knitting.

"Frau Professorin, I beg you to give me that book lying there."

"Ah, child, you cannot read; you must go to sleep."

"I am so tired of lying here, I think that book will send me to sleep."

The Professorin humoured the sick girl, and handed her the volume, thinking that she looked like a beautiful angel just ready to fly away. It was quite a stretch of her imagination, however, to soar as far as angels, and the Professorin was quite pleased with the idea, and stored it up to tell Ludwig. Sibyl did open the book, but only to take out the note, and then shut it up again. That note was what Austin had written to Grace. It contained the news of the Count's betrothal to a German lady, and the fact that most likely he had only meant to amuse himself with Sibyl. A blush of anger and displeasure overspread the girl's pale face. She had not doubted her power over him, never doubted that all he had said was true. In her own special treasure-box the diamond ring now lay, ready to be worn when she was well enough to be married—that ring which had appeared to her the foretaste of wealth; and yet here was a stranger, Mr. Gordon, writing such a thing to Grace. Shame and anger struggled in the girl's heart; but at that moment she first saw how foolish she

had been—nay, something more. "Only he must have meant it," she said to herself, hiding her face in her pillow. "He said he loved me, and, oh, so many things. Can any one say things like that and not mean them? It can't be true."

But this episode did her good. She replaced the note in the book, and, after a long time, fearing that Grace would come in, she begged the Professorin to put it on the shelf. She felt braced up now, and would get better. What was the use of sorrowing for what had never been hers? Like many other weak souls, Sibyl could be strong when not brought face to face with temptation.

When Grace came in she found her sister dozing more quietly than usual, and felt thankful that the Professorin went away at once to see after her husband, and that thus Grace could compose herself without any one seeing her. Poor Grace had suffered, not in Sibyl's way; she had no regrets about fortune or fine things, only she felt that she could have loved Austin, that she could have made him happy by an unchanging devotion. Then she pictured to herself his earnest manner and words, his good, noble face when pleading with her. How had she had the strength to refuse him anything? But even now she could not repent. Her pure soul felt deeper than everything else the reproach that was cast on her and her sister by that terrible discovery. They had no right to anything, no right to a name; they were outcasts; their life must be one of honest work and persevering toil. Besides, she must stay and take care of Sibyl; they must be everything to each other; surely this would, in time, make up for all other happiness.

There floated in Grace's mind some lines she had learnt in the old days when life was bright:

Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice.

That prayer was hers now. She felt that she would have loved him truly, loyally; but that for his sake it must not be—for his, and for the mother he had mentioned, and who naturally loved him so deeply.

When the room had become quite dusk, Sibyl awoke up, and Grace was near at hand expecting, as usual, the fretful impatience which she put down to the fever; but to-night Sibyl was so gentle, so patient, that Grace was surprised, and this was her first ray of comfort since the

episode in the acacia walk. Sibyl was certainly better, her head was cooler and her hand less weak.

"Gracie, did you enjoy being out?" she asked, almost in her old voice.

"No, dear, I don't think I did." Grace was very truthful. "Perhaps if you had been there——"

Sibyl sighed; the thought of music did not give her pleasure. When she got well, there would be the old round to begin again; it was hardly worth getting well again for that. Grace soon bestirred herself about her household cares, and tried to forget everything in being busy. One good thing of enforced toil is that time is not available for sorrowing, and Grace, apart from everything personal, was beginning to wonder what would happen to them when their money was spent if Sibyl did not soon get well. This illness had been a drain on their slender resources, and the future was dark indeed.

The next morning Gretchen knocked at the door, full of news.

"Oh, Fräulein Evans, have you heard that the English gentleman is going away to-day? He asked if you wanted him to fetch you anything in the town, and begged me to give you this note; but I do not like him as much as Herr Jones—he was so kind. Did I show you the ring he gave me? Ah, Fräulein, would you not like the Herr upstairs to give you a ring? You have not yet got one on your fingers." Grace laughed a little.

"No one ever gave me a ring when I was your age, Gretchen."

"No, but now you will soon get one. When one is betrothed, one has a ring; but I am too young for that; mine was given to me for beauty." Grace opened the note with trembling fingers. She meant to keep it and treasure it, just as Gretchen did her ring. There was no harm in that, when it meant nothing.

"DEAR MISS EVANS,—I am leaving to-day. No place now seems worth going to; but even if I were not obliged, I could not stay here after what you said—unless you wanted me. But I shall never alter my mind, and whatever may be your motive, I shall not consider it strong enough to make me change. I cannot say more than this; you were so decided last night that I cannot hope you will change your mind; but perhaps in time—for I shall wait as long as I live—you may see things in a different light. I have only one more

request to make you, that you will say good-bye to me as your friend, which I shall always be, if may be nothing else.

"AUSTIN GORDON."

"When does the English Herr go, Gretchen?"

"Ah, directly; he will be going downstairs in five minutes," and Gretchen, delighted at something new, stayed to witness the departure, and was there as Austin came down. Perhaps it was better for both that the young lady was inquisitive.

"Good-bye," Grace said, holding out her hand though she could not look up at him. "I shall think of you as happy with your mother and sisters." He could hold her hand now without fear, though it was almost pain to him to do so.

"I shall write to the Professorin, Miss Evans, and some day I shall come back, and then——"

"No, you must never come back for that," she said, hurriedly, "but as our friend."

"Shall you see Herr Jones?" put in Gretchen. "Will you tell him I think of him when I look at the ring? What a pity you cannot give one to Fräulein Evans, isn't it?" Austin was quite startled, but Gretchen's innocent face acquitted her of all double meaning.

"I would give her one if she would let me," he said.

"Do, do, have it!" cried Gretchen, quite excitedly.

"Come, Gretchen, go and see if the carriage is at the door," said Austin, to get rid of the child; but she being gone, the mother's step was next heard.

"Grace—look up—say that you will have it—in a year—ten years."

"Hush, please do not ask it. No, no, I will never have it," and Grace fled away from the temptation to say "yes"—a temptation which was so strong that she had to lock herself alone into her room, and to fall on her knees and pray for strength for this self-sacrifice.

Now at last he was gone and the beautiful dream was over; and that evening she breathed a sigh of relief. She had Sibyl to nurse and to think for, and the cares of providing enough to eat—a very real care which drives away much of the useless sorrow of sentiment; at least so Grace found.

Sibyl now daily grew better. Since she had seen that note her will was

strengthened; she would live to show the Count that she did not care.

It was some days before Grace told her of Austin's departure; but Sibyl expressed no sorrow, indeed she was glad; he knew about the Count, and therefore she would have been very shy of meeting him again; so all was for the best, and she did not find out Grace's secret; for Grace meant no one to know it, not even her sister.

The summer passed into autumn without Grace noticing very particularly the many changes. One care oppressed her now, for Sibyl still remained delicate and would not seek for any more teaching. She said she was not equal to the worry of it, which was perhaps true, but inconvenient, for she could only help Grace a little, and often left her to bear the whole burden alone. Grace never complained; why should she, when she was only too glad to take any trouble for her sister, if she were a little more tired than usual herself? She was strong, what did it matter? But the great reason of all was that Sibyl might run no risk of falling again into that danger from which Grace had but barely saved her. For this end Grace would have worked herself to death with a smile on her face, for love makes all things easy. Gradually Sibyl fell into the plan, and would go upstairs to sit with the Professorin, saying the noise made her head ache, and the Professorin liked having the pretty girl as a companion when she sat knitting those everlasting grey socks for her husband, as she chatted on about the neighbours. Sibyl even went out with her into the gardens, for she refused to take long walks since her illness.

Being more spoilt than usual, Sibyl became more exacting. Grace's self-denial was taken as a right; Sibyl even now and then in her own mind began again to regret the Count. He had certainly left Unterberg, for though she often looked for him, she never saw him. She wanted to tell him what she thought of him, and how she hated and despised him; but she as yet could only go over the scene in her own mind, till she almost fancied it had taken place.

Once Grace asked the Professorin if she had heard of the English gentleman, and the good lady replied yes, that he had written a long letter in German, and that her husband said the cases were wrong, but she thought it was good. She would look for the letter; but then she suddenly re-

membered she had wound a whole skein of grey wool round it, so when the wool was used up she would give it to Grace, only that shade of colour was just now not in use; so Grace, with a little sigh, renounced the idea of seeing the handwriting. Her own little note was now all the more precious, that was all. She would have liked to see the name of his home, she thought; but that did not really matter as it never could be at all associated with her. Wherever he was, she would think of him as a friend, and that was all that was necessary.

Nan's letters came less frequently now, she was so much occupied; her lady gave her no rest or peace, and barely time to eat her meals. So she wrote, making fun of her troubles; but she was so well paid, added she, that her little nest-egg was getting quite large. Time would soon pass, and then they would be able to enjoy themselves together in the old manner. Such loving words were very cheering, but Grace knew that the past could never come back again, for both she and Sibyl had passed through a world of sorrow, and when Nan's paradise came, it would be a place of rest and not one of pleasure.

Thus mused Grace; but, strangely enough, what seemed very far off was in truth quite near at hand.

CHAPTER XLIII. HOME WITH NAN.

THE little pupils were very tiresome now the weather was hot and English idioms difficult to acquire. Even Grace's patience failed at times, though she tried not to show it. How often she longed for another day in the woods, only he, Austin Gordon, would not be there with his kind forethought. He had gone home to dear old England and to his own people; there he would most likely forget her. From her heart she hoped that he would do so, for never could she be his wife. If she must be associated with disgrace, then she must bear her fate alone and help dear Sibyl to bear it also.

So the sisters once more resumed their quiet life, as it had been before they knew the Englishmen and the German Count. Now and then the Professorin gave Caffee Trinken; very tedious pleasures they were, during which Sibyl showed her weariness rather too plainly, and Grace found herself thinking of Austin instead of some good German Frau's dissertation on the best manner of bringing up children of

various ages. But if weariness increased the store of money did not do so, and Grace turned over and over again in her own mind what she could do to earn some more. Sibyl had again found some little pupils, and though Grace could not bear her going out alone, necessity forced her to do so. Besides, no one had again heard of the Count, so most likely he was married, or perhaps he was too much ashamed to show his face again. That was one comfort. Sibyl was still with her, only life beyond looked blank, and to Grace more than to Sibyl came oftenest the great longing for the old home. The heather would be in flower now, and the purple patches danced before her eyes like groups of gaily dressed fairies.

The brake fern in shady hollows were rearing their graceful, strong heads, and already the tinge of the autumn colouring was on them. In some distant hollow the blue smoke was curling from the low chimney of a cottage where peat was being burnt, and the odour it dispersed was sweeter to Grace than the most exquisite scent in the world. To some natures the home of their childhood is sacred, something which cannot be replaced, which can be compared with no other spot on earth—all the more so, if their lives have not been crowded with many blessings.

One day, when Grace felt sadder than usual, for she had had no answer to her last letter to Nan, she dismissed her children, and, putting on her hat, went forth to meet Sibyl. This she always did, if possible, however tired she might be.

At the foot of the stairs Gretchen met her and linked her arm into hers. She wanted to talk to "her darling little Fräulein," as she called her, though Grace was by no means little. The child's prattle was refreshing; it took Grace's thoughts off herself.

"Don't you wish, Fräulein, that the English gentlemen were back again? All my schoolfellows envy me my ring. What a pity you did not say yes when the Herr offered you one."

"Ladies do not receive presents from gentlemen, Gretchen; only little girls may do that."

"Why not?" retorted Gretchen. She felt herself very old, and quite as sensible as Fräulein Sibyl, who was so strange sometimes, for Gretchen had not forgotten her peep through the keyhole.

"Because," said Grace, trying to find

a good reason, "because one can only receive presents from people one loves."

"But couldn't you love Herr Gordon? He was kind, and I think he liked you very much," and Gretchen shook her head wisely. They had reached the market-place, in the midst of which stood the cathedral. The stalls were laid out in pretty picturesque rows, and all around them the many different head-dresses and ornamental skirts of the buyers and sellers made bright patches which contrasted well with the woodwork of the stalls.

"I should like to stand here and sell flowers, Fräulein, wouldn't you? I should make people buy my flowers for those they loved."

Grace laughed.

"Look, Fräulein, do you see that gentleman buying flowers? What beauties! I do believe it is the Count who used to lodge opposite to us."

"Where do you see him?" asked Grace, hurriedly. "I think you must be mistaken, Gretchen."

"No; look, Fräulein, near to the pretty girl who is selling flowers," and Grace, following the direction of Gretchen's little finger, saw the man whom she had hoped never to meet again. The handsome, calm, cruel face at which she had looked on that memorable evening was once more before her. What had he come for; how long had he been here; and had Sibyl seen him again?

Then and there Grace came to the determination to run away from Unterberg, to go far away out of the reach of that man; yes, even if they should beg their bread in a strange place. He had deceived Sibyl before and made her believe a lie, what if he should do it again, and she should be taken in? What if, in a moment of weakness and weariness, she should once more believe in the future greatness which the Count chose to hold out before her?

Grace only stayed to assure herself that she was not mistaken as to the Count's identity, and then hurried on across the market-place and down a street at the end of which lived the people who employed Sibyl. As she reached the door Sibyl herself came out; so to-day, at all events, she had not made an appointment with that man.

It was difficult to appear calm and unconcerned all the way home—difficult to answer Sibyl's questions with a show

of interest, and to agree to help Gretchen to choose a present for her mother's birthday.

Only when they were once more alone did Grace reluctantly broach the subject. She came and knelt down near to Sibyl, and took the small white hands in hers.

"My little sister," she said, lovingly, "I want you to tell me something."

Sibyl looked down and blushed painfully, so that Grace's heart almost stopped beating.

"What is it, Grace? What is the matter? Don't frighten me for nothing," she answered, hurriedly.

"I saw the Count this morning, Sibyl, darling. I saw him buying flowers in the market."

More blushes on Sibyl's part, then an angry jerk of her shoulder.

"Well, I cannot help it if you did see him."

"No, but, Sibyl, tell me, have you seen him?"

Grace said it firmly this time; she would know the truth. Something in her sister's face suddenly melted Sibyl; she burst into tears as she threw her arms round Grace.

"Oh, Grace, Grace, my own sister! Indeed, indeed, I have only seen him once, and I would have nothing to say to him, only—only—Save me from him! I am so weak, and he says such things to me. He says it is all false, and that he has never forgotten me, and that he will marry me. But if it were not true?"

Sibyl half wished to be saved from herself, and half longed for the grand things dangled before her eyes. But Grace only heard the one cry, "Save me!"

She would save her; this time there should be no doubt, no hesitation. She would leave Unterberg, and the few kind friends they had made, and she would take Sibyl back to England—to London—anywhere near Nan; Nan's very presence in a town would be a safeguard.

"Will you come with me, Sibyl, tomorrow, away from here? Will you come back to our country?"

"Yes," sobbed Sibyl; she knew herself this would be the only way of flying from temptation.

That yes was enough for Grace. She did not lose a minute, but looked over her little store of money, which, when their few debts were paid, would only just enable them to reach England. They must travel third-class, and stop as little

as possible on the way; by this means they would reach London, and Nan was there. Nan would help them; Grace never doubted this for a minute. As long as she could think this, surely they were not friendless.

That very afternoon she telegraphed to Nan: "We must come home; meet us in London." She put down the day and the hour, and then she proceeded to pack up their few possessions. The surprise expressed by Frau Hanson and the Professorin can be imagined, and Grace could only say, with tears in her eyes, that she had heard something that compelled them to go back at once to England. Frau Hanson hoped secretly it was a fortune, and the Professorin lifted up her hands in astonishment. The Professor gave Grace a dissertation on the greatness of Germany compared with that of other countries, England especially, and said that only in the Vaterland could freedom be found for the mind. He tapped his forehead, and looked at Grace pityingly. How could she leave such a country?

"But I don't want freedom," said Grace, smiling in spite of herself. "I want bondage. There is so much danger in freedom. But some day I shall come to see you again, dear friends, and Sibyl and I can never thank you enough for all your great kindness to us who were strangers to you."

"That is nothing," said the Professorin, folding Grace in her large fat arms. "You are dear, good, pretty children, you especially, Fräulein Grace; but you have not yet learnt to knit like a German. By the way, child, I won't forget to send you the Herr's letter when my ball of worsted is knitted up. Leave me your address."

Grace had none to leave, so she put down on an envelope Nan's address. That was the safest thing. The Professorin put it up behind the looking-glass on the chimney-piece and said she would remember.

"We will not forget you," echoed the Professor; "and you, charming Fräulein, think sometimes of me, labouring to find out truth. As our immortal Goethe says: 'To find out error is easy, to discover the truth is difficult; error is on the surface, but truth dwells at the bottom of the well.' Ab, Fräulein, it is there I must go!"

"It is all in his mind," added his wife, apologetically, aside to Grace, "for really 'mein mann' does not like cold water;

but he and Goethe express themselves oddly, that is all. Come into the kitchen, child, and let me do you up some cakes for the way."

In their homely fashion the women did all they could to speed the traveller, though they were both very curious to know the business that required such haste. Sibyl busied herself nervously over the packing, half-repenting her determination, for London was even a more dreary prospect than sunny Unterberg, and bread even harder to earn there, as she had often heard from Nan's own mouth. There was, however, no repenting on Grace's part, even though the mammas of the pupils complained bitterly of this sudden exodus, and some even refused to pay the few thalers that were owing to the English teacher on account of her having given no notice of departure.

After all, the way was made smooth to them, and Grace's face became radiant the nearer they approached England.

Sibyl caught some of the feeling. She even breathed a sigh of relief that now, at all events, she could not go back and could not meet the Count. He had exercised a strong influence over the girl's mind—a passing madness it had been—and now that the possibility was gone, she suddenly found out that Grace had been her guardian angel. But for Grace—Now, at last, she began to look truly on the picture of the "might have been." What if Nan should not meet them? That was the horrible fear in both their minds. Suppose, by some chance or other, she had not received the telegram, where should they go in London, where they knew no one, not even the name of an hotel? But Grace said to herself:

"Nan will come. Oh, I am sure she will."

Then came the sea passage. This time it was calm, so the sisters stayed on board; and now every ripple seemed to say the word "home," or at all events, England. Their hearts seemed full to bursting, when at last the steamer stopped and they touched English soil, and everywhere around them they heard their own dear native English spoken, instead of the guttural German tongue. They held each other's hands and almost laughed for joy!

Then followed the train journey to London, the approach to the big city through those long tunnels, the frequent passing of trains, the beating of their hearts and their silence for fear Nan should

not be there. Then came the slow drawing up of the train at the terminus; the eager heads of many passengers thrust out to catch a first sight of friends, and Sibyl, not Grace, joined in the search. It was she who called out:

"Grace! Grace! there is Nan!" and then the girl broke down and burst into tears.

She was safe at last, and only at this moment did the feeling of horror come over her at the might have been. Grace might have arrived without her, and what would Nan have said, and what would she have felt?

The train stopped at last, and Nan's figure was hurrying towards them, for they had been carried forward far beyond her, as if the train meant to cheat them of their only friend, and then came the little cry and the warm kisses.

"My children, my darlings, you have come home. Grace, how tired you look! And here is my little Sibyl. How pale you are, child; but it will be all right now, you can come home—my home, our home."

Grace was sobbing, quietly. She could not help it, for the burden seemed suddenly lifted from her shoulders; she felt young again.

"Just to see you is home, Nan."

"Nonsense, child; seeing me won't find us in bread and butter. Your telegram crossed my letter. There, I must tell you at once. My old aunt is dead, and she has left me all her belongings. Grace, can you believe it, we are really rather rich!"

Nan laughed such a happy laugh.

"There is enough for all of us."

Sibyl stared at Nan, not able to believe these words, then she murmured:

"Nan—Grace, you deserve it all, but I don't." Only just then Grace said "Hush," and after that all was bustle and confusion, till the cab stopped at the door of a small London house, which was now their home, and riches indeed to these three, who had so lately been outcasts. The owner of half a million could not have felt richer than they did as they passed that threshold. Home! home! The word rang in their ears, and Nan, turning to them, said:

"I have got all I want now. No one can take you away from me, not even Mrs. Gordon."

That night three thankful hearts were glad, and three heads rested on soft pillows; but Sibyl could not rest well, and long before Grace was up, she was

making up her mind to go and tell Nan; but how could she?

Grace woke early; but in the midst of her happiness she thought of Austin Gordon. He would never know what had become of her, and she would never cross his path again; but she could, she must love him always. Love could not hurt him—a love no one knew about, and no one should ever guess—no, not even Nan or Sibyl.

Nan, too, woke early, with her heart full of happiness; but suddenly she heard a tap at the door, and in another moment Sibyl was near to her. Sibyl was sobbing and making her confession.

"Oh, Nan! Nan! I have been so wicked, I am not fit to live with you and Grace, let me go away and try and get better."

Then she told her all, and Nan shuddered to think of the danger her darling had so narrowly escaped.

"Let me go away from happiness," said poor Sibyl.

"Nonsense, child! You have shown yourself so little able to be trusted, that I shall not trust you out of my sight again. It is fortunate for you that Grace is made of different stuff. As to this Count, why, silly child, do you think Counts marry little unknown Sibyls?"

"But I thought he loved me," said the girl, reassured by Nan's tone; it was "home" to be scolded by her.

"Loved you! A pretty love to show itself in this manner! You have been a little fool. It was time my aunt died, and left me her home for you to come back to. Love, indeed! A false, wicked villain, who deserves horsewhipping. But don't look so miserable; think of Grace, and don't spoil her home-coming."

"And can you ever love me again?" asked poor Sibyl, feeling quite crushed.

"Love you! You are only a child, after all; but what could be expected when—" Nan stopped; she was not going to think of Mrs. Gordon, and so spoil her happiness.

"Nan, kiss me. Look here, I want you to take this; I don't know what to do with it, and I hate the very sight of it."

Sibyl opened her hand, and Nan saw a beautiful diamond ring lying on the rosy palm. It glittered and sparkled in the morning light, and hid a strange tale of temptation and wickedness.

"Humph! Is that what he gave you? I should like to throw it away, but one learns wisdom as one grows older, and so

you shall put it in the alms-bag next Sunday at St. Nathanael-in-the-Gutter. There is a new curate come to work there, and he is a very earnest little man."

Here we may as well add that Mr. Philips was somewhat troubled by noticing a lovely girl in church—a girl whose face reminded him so strongly of his lost Minnie, that he had a struggle with himself not to go off into a dream of past joy. Further, he was still more surprised to find a valuable diamond ring in the bag—a ring such as no Longham parishioner would have dreamt of giving in church or to the poor. He judged Longham severely, and was, as we know, quite wrong as to the motive of the gift; but in this he was not singular.

"Now," said Nan, resolutely, as she kissed Sibyl, "never mention the subject again, and you will soon forget the Count and your own silliness. Then, when we have had our breakfast, we will go over all our new possessions, and see if we can't make our little Sibyl wiser as well as happier."

Happiness is easily imagined, and so we will leave these three to enjoy what was to them like a fairyland of unexpected treasures, for Miss Evans's aunt had all her life acquired as much as she could, and given away as little as was possible.

OUR QUARTERS IN BARBADOS.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

It is six o'clock on a June morning. My wife and I are awakened by a noise which has more in it of England than of the tropics, namely, the sharp, impatient chirp of a sparrow, perched on the window-sill and demanding his accustomed breakfast. The sparrow seems ubiquitous. He is the last bird you see on leaving home and the first to meet you in your foreign port. At Bermuda, on the voyage out, he flew on board the ship ere she had yet dropped her anchor. Here, in Barbados, he is fearless of man, and hops about the floor at your feet, looking at you with his bright eye, and regardless of cats—an unmistakable sparrow, though his plumage is even dingier than that of his English relative.

Now our black cook (a born genius in her art) knocks at the door with the tray of tea and toast which forms our early morning meal. I rise to take it in, and to give the birds their share, and, whilst

scattering the crumbs, take a survey of the prospect from the window.

It is a beautiful sight, which, though there is, perhaps, a certain element of sameness about it, not found in English scenery, yet has variety and charm enough not to pall. Over a wilderness of aloes, shore grapes (in botanical language known as "*coccoloba uvifera*"), Barbadian cedars (otherwise "*bignonia leucoxylon*"), ceibas, and bananas, the eye passes to the sea beyond. It is calmer than usual this morning, but the everlasting surf, which is never silent day or night, still breaks in sheets of pure white foam over the coral reef that everywhere fringes the coast. As for the sea itself, it stretches away to the far horizon, a glittering sheet of blue, and its surface is diversified only by the white sails of the flying fish fleet, beating up to windward against the light breeze on their way to the fishing ground, whence the boats will return in the afternoon with a goodly store of dolphins or red fish for sale to the garrison, and baskets full of flying fish—as plentiful here as ever were herrings in Cornwall, and by no means to be despised when cooked in a pie or fried for breakfast.

There has been a dead calm all night, and now that the trade wind is freshening the vessels bound for the island begin to appear on the far horizon to the eastward, for Bridgetown Harbour is a busy place, and the number of vessels entering it very large indeed. All the morning one may watch them pass, most of them in ballast and high out of the water, with square sails set which may not have been struck for weeks together. These ships are coming for cargoes of rough sugar, to be refined elsewhere, in some land where fuel is cheaper than in Barbados. Other vessels, mostly schooners and brigantines, show signs of being heavily laden, and no wonder, for the island has a population bordering on a hundred and eighty thousand souls, and of manufactures none; whilst almost every pound of food eaten by this great multitude is imported. The object for which Barbados was created, in the opinion of its inhabitants, was to grow sugar-cane, and nothing else. Even the fruit eaten in the island is in great part brought from Jamaica, Antigua, and St. Lucia, by the trading schooners, whilst refined sugar is actually dearer in this, its birthplace, than in far-off England, and the general cost of living almost double that at home.

With so many vessels arriving daily from all parts of the globe, it would be strange if no incidents worthy of note transpired, though in these unromantic days the sea has little more of the unusual to offer than the land. Nevertheless here are two stories, simple in themselves, but out of which more than one charming tale might be constructed.

On the tenth of May, a year or two ago, the barque "Crescent" arrived at Barbados. Just one hundred and thirty-seven days before, she had left the Puerto Arena. Soon after starting, the terrible disease known as "berri-berri" had developed on board and spread like wildfire. All the crew—ten souls—took the contagion; three died on the voyage; three in the Harbour of Bridgetown; two landed ill and were cured in the quarantine hospital on Pelican Island, where all arrivals from suspected ports are detained; the remaining two men took the disease lightly. But when the ill-fated ship came at last into harbour, after her fourteen weeks' beating to windward under the scorching tropical sky, not a man on board was strong enough to go aloft and furl the sails; they had just strength enough to drop the anchor, with topsails standing, and wait for help.

Four days previous to this, the barque "Crown Prince" had arrived from Rio de Janeiro. Her crew consisted of fifteen men, she being a fine and well-found vessel of nine hundred and seventy tons burthen. On the nineteenth day of her voyage every man on board was stricken with yellow fever, which had developed shortly after they left Rio. The captain and five men were dead, and only the steward, one man, and a boy were able to crawl on deck and navigate the ship. In this desperate condition they sighted a Swedish vessel and made signals of distress. On learning their unhappy state, the first officer of the Swede and a Swedish sailor most nobly volunteered to go on board that floating hell and take her into Barbados. It was almost certain death—more certain than the veriest forlorn hope of the battlefield—and the men for whom they sacrificed themselves were not even of their own nation. The "Crown Prince" reached her destination safely, but both the heroic volunteers took the fever; the seaman died, the mate, with care, recovered.

The local papers of Barbados gave him a word of praise, and that was all. Yet many a brave man who wears

the Victoria Cross on his breast might well have shrunk from the task that this simple sailor had accomplished.

For that awful yellow fever is the curse of the West Indies; but for it, or rather but for the fear and the dread of it, Barbados might well be considered the healthiest place on earth. Twelve degrees Fahrenheit is the whole range of its temperature, summer and winter; the soil is a pervious coral rock through which the heavy rainfall percolates, washing out every pore and crevice, and the life-giving "doctor," the north-east trade wind, blows over the island day and night. It is a climate where the old renew their youth, and where children flourish like the vegetation around them. But, spite of quarantine, and spite of Royal Engineers and modern sanitation, all who dwell there know that some day or other the fatal news may be whispered that Yellow Jack is abroad. Whispered it will be at first, for the colonists hate the word, and are sure to tabulate the first cases as typhoid fever or liver disease, or, in short, anything but what it is. But soon facts will defy them, and the word at last go forth that another epidemic is in their midst.

Then will come a rush for the mail steamers by those whom no duty calls to remain, and then the funeral processions to the garrison churchyard, and the rows of graves therein, the inscriptions of which make even the careless solemn for a while as they read how such an one lost his wife and two children within the space of four days, and such another wife her husband, and how such an officer, just beginning his career, died eight days after landing in the plague-stricken island. In the old days we left our troops to die or live as they could, but now a better spirit prevails. In the last yellow fever epidemic at Barbados, when the men and officers began to die like flies, we shipped the whole garrison back to England, and thereby saved many a valuable life. This was in the autumn of 1881, ten years ago. There has been no visitation since, and, of course, in the opinion of most of the colonists, there never will be another. Let us hope that their confidence will not be misplaced.

We have wandered a long way from the view we were just now admiring, but this paper pretends no attention to the "unities," only to be a record of scenes and observations as they may happen to

strike the mind of the observer. Now the sparrows have finished their last crumb, and the fleet of fishing-boats is out of sight behind the silk cotton-tree (*bombax ceiba*), we will return to our window.

That *ceiba* is the largest tree in sight, and we should be ungrateful to dismiss it without a word. Just now it is covered only with fresh green leaves, but later on it will bear a crop of thousands of long pods, like green rolls, each filled to bursting with the softest and most delicate of fibres—real silk-cotton. About the month of April these pods will begin to open, and then the air will be full of fleecy white flakes, like a snowstorm, every flake bearing a round black seed in search of some favourable soil. To us these seeds are a source of annoyance, for the cotton that envelopes them is the very thing of all others for stuffing cushions, but takes an interminable time to clean of the seeds. I have heard that in the old slavery days in America, before the application of machinery to the raw material, it was a day's work for a woman to clean a pound of cotton, and I can well believe it.

The sun shines brilliantly, but away to the eastward is a dark cloud. I have scarcely had time to notice this fact when a gust of wind rattles the shutters, and is followed by what in England we should call a smart thunder shower, only here there is no thunder, and the thirsty ground absorbs the deluge as it falls; so that ten minutes after the rain is over there is no trace left of its having fallen at all, save a few large drops of water on the great leaves of the bananas, and a smell of fresh earth rising through the open windows.

Now is the time for a walk or a ride; but I, being lazy, take a book, and lie down again inside the mosquito curtains, where I can enjoy in safety an hour's luxurious reading, whilst the cool breeze blows over the bed. Our room has seven windows, and all are open, night and day. In this clime one can lie on a couch all night, with half a gale of wind fluttering the sheet, and take no harm. But you must have your curtains, for the West Indian mosquito is a wary and most intelligent insect, and the little drop of poison that he ejects through his proboscis, when he has made a hole in your skin, has a most irritating effect, and one that lasts for days. He loves a new comer, fresh from England, and, to gain his object, displays a knowledge of tactics

which I have often admired. Before retiring to rest you must carefully make the circuit of your curtains. Nothing is to be seen. You go to bed, with candle lighted, prepared for a last perusal of your book before you go to sleep. Presently a shadow of evil omen crosses the page, and you know that your enemy has found you. You make a dart at him, clapping your hands together in hopes of enclosing him between them, but in vain. He has vanished like a dream, and—now he knows that you are after him—you will see him no more. Safely ensconced beneath the bed, he will return no more till the light is out and you are peacefully asleep. Next morning you will awake to find two or three red spots of intolerable irritation on your exposed hand or foot, and, looking up, will see your tormentor, swollen to twice his usual size, asleep on the gauze. Easy enough he will be to kill now, and an ugly mark of your blood he will leave behind him on the white curtain.

But now it is time to dress for breakfast, and to go over to the office. As I sit there signing papers, I can see from the window a curious scene.

A great bearded fig-tree has died, from poverty of soil and the long drought, and the Royal Engineers have sent a party to cut it down, the said party consisting of three negroes and a black overseer with a grey beard. For tools they have a crosscut saw and a pickaxe with its head loose. After a great deal of talk, operations are begun. One man sits upon the ground and grasps a handle of the saw; his fellow-worker kneels. The saw, in consequence, bends like a bow, and is pulled through the wood by a great expenditure of strength. Fortunately the timber is pretty rotten.

Overseer—after a long meditation.—“You, Davis, you no see you cutting crooked? Take out saw.”

Davis grins and withdraws the saw, showing a slanting cut half-way through the stem of the tree, which bids fair to end in the ground eventually, if prolonged. The overseer walks round and round the tree, muttering to himself, whilst his three workmen pass a bottle to each other and refresh themselves.

Overseer.—“You bring saw round this side.”

No reply.

“Dat man Davis, he deaf,” with great contempt. “You, Roberts, you bring saw. It near twelve o'clock now.”

The saw being at length brought, is set

to work on the side towards which the tree leans. The two men working it take a few languid cuts and stop. The overseer dances with rage and waves his stick.

"You go on. What you stop for? Go on," with a shriek. "See, Captain coming out of his office."

The men grin and make a few quick cuts. The tree leans over a little and jams the saw tight; hereupon all jump up and gesticulate, and finally all four take hold of the handles and wrench the unlucky instrument out, minus some of its teeth. This sobers them a little, and they recommence at the right side of the tree again. Presently there is a slight crack of a fibre of the wood, whereupon the sawyers jump up and fly for their lives. The overseer dances about, and inveighs against their cowardice. At last he prevails on them to begin again. Another crack is heard. One man lets go his saw-handle so suddenly that the other falls over, and yells:

"What for you want to kill me, and me father seven small children?"

Peace is restored; vain efforts are made to upset the tree by the use of the pickaxe in the saw-cut. Finally the overseer forces two of his best labourers to go on with the sawing, threatening them with the most severe penalties if they stop for an instant. After a few more panics a gust of wind catches the high branches and the great trunk falls majestically, amidst a chorus of:

"Dat a good job."

"We do that well," etc.

The overseer salutes proudly, and the proceedings terminate.

A lower race than the whites these negroes undoubtedly are, but a far happier one. Probably, in the West Indies, they are the happiest people in the world. Perpetual sun and warmth, little or no work, clothes that cost a few pence, houses that can be run up or taken down in a day, food and drink in abundance—all these added to a mind that is never troubled by introspection or by dread of the future, spiritual or temporal, make the lot of the negro an enviable one in its way; but his Utopia is not, and never can be, the white man's.

In Barbados the chief enemy of the black race is consumption, of which many of them die, though it is practically unknown here amongst Europeans. The cause is simply that all negroes, without exception, hermetically seal up their huts

at night, partly from fear of mysterious ghosts or "duppies," partly to keep out mosquitos, and partly again because they wish to keep out cold.

For, strange as it may appear, the naturalised West Indian negro shivers in a temperature of seventy-four degrees, and, on the rare occasions in winter when the thermometer falls to seventy degrees, he is blue with cold and almost incapacitated from work. No doubt he is warm enough in his hut at night, with every shutter closed and every chink and cranny stuffed with rags, but nature avenges herself for this exclusion of her purifying oxygen by colds and coughs. The negro has quack remedies and balsams by the dozen for these, but they do not save him from the tubercle that soon forms in his lungs and eats his life away. After all, he is little missed; he has had a short life and a pleasant one. His relatives will feel a pride in covering themselves with crape, of colour almost as black as their own complexions, for crape is "de rigueur" amongst the negresses of Barbados. He will probably leave after him six or seven children, mostly illegitimate, since the black ladies have strong objections to the bond of matrimony. But here the question of pounds, shillings, and pence does not intrude itself as it does at home. It costs so little to bring up a black baby that there is really no reason whatever for its parents to consider the future. When it grows up, an hour's work or so a day will keep it in clothes and food. So, in the streets of Bridgetown, the happy little black imps swarm like flies, and the island has the densest population per square mile of any place in the known world, that is, if what they say about Chinese statistics be true.

Correspondence is not very heavy here, as the mails from home and from the outlying islands only arrive and depart once a fortnight. So we will leave the office and take a stroll in the garden before luncheon. It is decidedly hot—eighty-six degrees in the shade, and very little shade to be had. Under the tamarind-trees the land-crabs are slowly crawling, and dragging the fallen fruit into their holes, which are as large and as numerous as those of a rabbit-warren. Quite as shy of man as any English rabbit are the old and wary patriarchs of the crustacean colony, with their brown shells, their great claws, and their weird, rugged, and ungainly shape. At the first sound of my footstep there is a

quick scurry for the holes and a rapid dive into them. The inherited instinct of many generations has taught them that the negro loves their flesh—and the white man, too, on occasion, though the latter prefers to "scour" them first by a judicious feeding on corn-meal, since he knows that the taste of his victim in the matter of "flesh-meat" is peculiar and not at all particular. Hunting crabs at night with a lantern, a fork, and a sack, is the delight of the black boy, and in the excitement of the chase he is not particular as to trespassing, as I have found to my cost, by getting my young banana plants trampled down.

The smaller crabs, from one inch to three or four in breadth, are not much afraid of man. Their colour is a most brilliant red, brighter than that of a boiled lobster; and they swarm everywhere—in the house as well as out of it. We have a kitten, and, the other day, she came limping into the room. I examined her and found a small crab-claw holding on to each of her fore-feet. She is fond of teasing crabs, and evidently one of them had resented her attentions by catching her first by one foot, and then by the other put down to release herself. The claws have a very curious faculty of holding on tightly, even when cast off by their owner; and we had considerable difficulty in releasing poor pussy.

Little green humming-birds hover in the grass, and shoot up again into the tops of the trees. They can enjoy life here on very easy terms, since every bush, shrub, and tree has a flower full of scented honey. Yonder is the most beautiful tree in Barbados, if not in the world, just coming into bloom. Here they call it the "flamboyant"; in India it is known as the "gold mohur-tree." It is a "poinciana." No words can describe the gorgeous richness of its flowers. When it is in blossom, it can be seen for miles—a living mass of orange-crimson. Could such a tree be made to flower in England as it does here, people would come from all parts of the kingdom to see it.

There are no seasons, practically speaking, in Barbados, and the effect on vegetation is curious. The trees never seem to know exactly whether to make it summer or autumn. Often you may see, on the same tree, leafless branches, flowers, and ripe fruit. Here, on this poinciana, amongst the mass of blossom, you can discover great pods, two feet long and three inches across. Open one and it will dis-

close a row of long, narrow seeds, almost cylindrical in shape, and each carefully stored in its own separate and distinct partition, like boys in a school dormitory.

Here is a tall stem, to climb which the said schoolboy would find a difficult task. It is covered with thorns as high as the eye can reach, and is as unapproachable as a wall with broken glass on it. Had the rooks and magpies of home lands such a place to build in, how they would rejoice. It is the sand box-tree (*hura crepitans*), and its queer spheroidal, crumpled fruit is extensively used here, filled with lead, as a paper-weight. It makes a very handsome one, and, in this clime of open doors and windows, he who attempts to write without something to secure his papers, will certainly repent it.

I would fain go on to describe some other of the strange trees here; but after all, they are all strange to an English eye, and a book would be required to do them justice. So, as it is now close on lunch time, we will leave the garden to the land-crabs, and carry in the basket of roses, Cape jasmine, and gardenia, which will serve to fill the vases for the afternoon, and can then be thrown away. Here our costly hothouse flowers are almost weeds, and an English primrose would be of more value—could it be grown—than a *Eucharis* lily.

HISTORIC EPIDEMICS.

WE may sincerely hope that the "influenza" epidemic, from which Europe is now suffering, is not destined to be widely "historic." It has done mischief enough, it has left many notable blanks in the "fighting line" of civilisation and progress, and brought grief to many a family and home; but it has not yet reached a height of evil that gives it a title to rank with the great epidemics which at one time or other have wrought destruction on mankind. The "tale" of these is sufficient, and although we can scarcely venture to hope that great pestilences are things altogether of the past in civilised lands, yet we may have some confidence that our sanitary organisation, defective as it may be, will enable us to limit and control them. But we may be sure, from the experience of the past, that where want and misery exist among considerable masses of population thickly crowded together, pestilence in some of its forms is sure to follow.

As far as records go, there is no age, however remote, in which great infections are unknown. A terrible plague is said to have desolated the world 767 B.C., and the authentic histories of Greece and Rome show a tolerably continuous record of such scourges.

The Welsh Bardic Triads reveal to us three dreadful pestilences of the Isle of Britain, and the more prosaic Saxon Chronicle gives us the date of many similar visitations. There was a great pestilence A.D. 664, while under the year 897, the chronicler records: "Thanks be to God, the army (of invading Northmen) had not utterly broken up the Angle Race; but they were much more broken in three years by a mortality of cattle and men." Another great mortality is recorded A.D. 962, when "the great fever was in London;" and the year 1087 saw the visitation of a disorder, which was perhaps a kind of influenza, widespread, but not assuming the destructive character of a pestilence, as it is recorded "that almost every other man was in the worst evil, that is with fever, and that so strongly that many men died of the evil." Years of pestilence, too, are found in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But all these, and every recorded calamity of the kind, shrink into comparative insignificance before the terrible plague that ravaged the then known world about the middle of the fourteenth century, variously called the Black Death or the great mortality.

The beginnings of the Black Death arose in China about the year 1333, with drought and famine in the great river plains which were followed by floods so violent that four hundred thousand people perished. Great telluric convulsions occurred over the same tracts. The mountain Tsingcheou fell in, and vast clefts were formed, from which it is said that noxious vapours ascended. Anyhow, flood and famine were followed next year by a terrible plague, which carried off five millions of the wretched Chinese, while in 1337 a still more dreadful famine destroyed another four millions. The destructive march of the pestilence cannot now be accurately traced; but it swept along from east to west, slowly enough, but with inexorable wing. Rumours of trouble and disaster heralded its approach. A thick, stinking mist was reported to herald or accompany the march of the fell destroyer. Nor were there wanting signs and wonders in the sky, and a grand conjunction of the

three superior planets, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, in the sign of Aquarius, twenty-fourth March, 1345, might have been read by those acquainted with the secrets of the stars as portentous of unheard-of disasters.

That the infection was conveyed in the air, and spread itself with the varied tides and currents of the ærial ocean, seems evident, for it fell upon ships at sea, and ravaged the most secluded places; but it was also extremely contagious, and followed the lines of trade routes, and seized upon every artery of traffic. In England the Black Death made its first appearance in Dorsetshire, and quickly spreading over the west, it reached London by way of Oxford, leaving death and desolation behind it everywhere. It was as fatal in the country as in the town. Whole villages were depopulated, and small towns almost wiped out of existence. The dead lay unburied as they had died, for priests had been swept away with their flocks, and in many parishes there was no one left to celebrate mass, while every trade and craft was suspended in the universal terror and suspense. To add to the horror of the times, bands of marauders roamed about unmolested, robbing alike the dead and the living; and dogs, deprived of their masters by death, came together in packs, made ferocious by hunger, and scoured the country like so many bands of wolves.

The Black Death was doubtless what we now know as the Oriental plague in its most virulent form. It was accompanied with inflammatory boils and black spots, the appearance of which was esteemed the sure forerunner of death. Its terrible destructiveness is characteristic of the progress of a new disease germ among people not inured to its effects. Dr. Hecker, whose book on mediæval epidemics is still an authority, calculates that at least a quarter of the inhabitants of the old world were swept away by this terrible visitation. There is no direct evidence to show whether it reached the then undiscovered hemisphere, and worked similar havoc there.

A profound and lasting effect followed the carnage of the Black Death. It would seem as if the human spirit, concentrated in form and force, took a new departure. Old ideas had been swept away with those who cherished them, and a hardier and more reckless spirit pervaded the survivors. Literature has preserved one great memorial of the Black Death in the Decameron of

Boccaccio, the plan of which is based upon the ravages of the pestilence in Florence, and the determination of a party of gay dames and cavaliers to retire to some secluded villa and forget all about the plague, while they enjoy every luxury and pleasure, and entertain each other with stories that are more amusing than edifying.

It is probable too, that the Black Death carried off in its train some of the lingering disorders of the time. We do not hear much about leprosy in England after the fourteenth century, although up to that time the leper with his clapper and dish had been an object familiar enough in the outskirts of town and villages, where leper houses were provided for the isolation of these unfortunates. The present palace of St. James's was originally the site of a hospital for female lepers, and many similar hospitals were in existence up to the time of the Reformation. Leper windows are still to be found in our churches, commanding a view of the high altar, so that the leper from outside might join the devotions of those with whom he was forbidden to associate.

Smallpox, too, was not unknown at that date; a disease which we are told we owe to the Saracens, who brought it with them from Arabia, and made its first appearance in England in the thirteenth century.

But after the Black Death our country enjoyed a comparative immunity from epidemics, and this was not disturbed till the year 1485 brought Richmond and his soldiers to wrest the crown from Richard on Bosworth field. The conqueror's troops were a set of half-famished mercenaries brought suddenly into a land of plenty; diseases broke out among them, and spread with lightning-like rapidity among the burly well-fed English. The citizens of London had hastened to greet the new King, but they paid dearly for their loyalty, as the new disease, called the sweating sickness, carried them off as in a murrain. Two Lord Mayors and six Aldermen were carried off in a week, a destruction never known before or since in the City annals. The disease swept over the country like fire, carrying off the hearty and robust, and strange to say, attacking only the English. The disease never established itself on the Continent, and when it appeared in some of the foreign seaports, it seemed to pick out the English established there and spare the rest. The first appearance of the sweating sickness lasted only five weeks,

though attended with incredible mortality, and it disappeared as suddenly as it had arisen, in the great tempest which marked New Year's Day, 1486. But it appeared again in 1517, and again in 1528, frightening Henry the Eighth and his Court almost out of their wits, and it broke out again sporadically at Shrewsbury in 1551, and thereafter was no more heard of, at any rate in that particular form.

If the sixteenth century was notable for its "sweating sickness," the seventeenth was no less so for successive visitations of the Oriental plague. From the time of the Black Death this peculiar scourge had lurked among the unhealthy cities of the East. Cairo was long a focus of the disease, and the crowded seaports of the Levant were the active agents in distributing the germs of this fearful disorder. Successive outbreaks in London, A.D. 1625 and 1631, heralded the terrible visitation of 1665, better known to us than any previous pestilence from the evidence of Pepys and of Evelyn in their diaries, and from the powerful description of Daniel Defoe. The great pits into which the dead were indiscriminately thrown are still pointed out by popular tradition. Through the streets, deserted by every other vehicle, moved the dead-carts, accompanied by the bellman, who uttered the melancholy cry, "Bring out your dead." Infected houses were marked with a red cross, and the inmates forbidden to issue forth. But the plague ran its course and died out in the following winter, and the year 1666, with the purifying flames of the great fire of London, seems to have effectually disposed of it.

The eighteenth century, though not distinguished by any widespread pestilence, was visited by many destructive local epidemics. Smallpox was especially virulent, with scarlet fever and typhus, and while the rude municipal precautions of an earlier date had fallen into disuse, no effective sanitary system had taken their place.

The present century will be known to posterity, probably, as the age of cholera. Not that the disease itself is of modern origin, for it has hung about the teeming plains of India and the marshy deltas of its great rivers from time immemorial, and its original cause is to be sought in a low standard of vitality among races oppressed by successive layers of plunderers and conquerors, and also in the gathering of large masses of half-fed human beings

in crowded pilgrimages to their great fetiches and shrines. But the first great world-famed pestilence had its first recorded origin in 1817, at Jessore, a town not a hundred miles to the north-east of Calcutta. Soon the disease spread all over India, which it ravaged for a couple of years, when its force declined, but it had already commenced its slow, relentless march towards the west.

The "plague" of other days had seemed to poison with infected air. The cholera poured its deadly germs into the water; it seized upon the rivers and poisoned the fountains. So virulent was the poison that a traveller bringing the germs of the disease to a town that drained into a river previously uninfected, was sufficient cause for the spread of the pestilence over the whole district that the river served. Thus ranges of mountains delayed its progress, and it overleapt them only by human agency. But one barrier after another was crossed, and after desolating Persia, the Euphrates valley, and Syria, this shadow of grim death appeared on the confines of Europe. But the disease had also worked its way to the north-east of its source, and had traversed China and Mongolia, and presented itself on the frontiers of Russia on that side also. The Russian officials, awe-struck at the progress of the destruction, sought to take counsel with the Mandarins for means to arrest the invasion, but these last were quite content to leave matters as they were. "The more room for the rest," was their cheerful commentary on the death of myriads.

But on the frontiers of Europe the fell disease made a long pause, and it was not till 1830 that it showed itself in full force in Northern Europe, ravaging Russia, Prussia, and Poland, and attacking Berlin in 1831. The infection followed the course of the Elbe and the Rhine; it reached Hamburg in 1831, and from thence a ship's crew brought the disease to Sunderland. London was devastated in 1832, and Paris suffered terribly in the same year.

Although cholera died out in Europe it continued to lurk in Eastern lands, and in 1846 attacked the vast crowd of Mohammedan pilgrims, who were congregated at Meccah and Medina. This outburst was an indication of more stealthy progress in other directions. Again the cholera made its way through Northern Europe, followed the Elbe, made its mark at Hamburg, and was carried across the

silver streak to London, which it reached at the end of the year 1848. Again there was great mortality throughout the country, and the disease, when it retreated, still kept its grip upon the borderlands of Europe and Asia, and ravaged England and France again in 1853-4, and hung about the camps of contending armies in the Crimea.

For battles and sieges in general the cholera has an unfailing appreciation. It appeared in 1866, during the Austro-Prussian War, and if we escaped a general pestilence after the Franco-German War, that was due perhaps to the severe winter which concluded the campaign. But cholera wrought havoc enough among the Turks and Russians in their sanguinary struggle, although its ravages did not extend far beyond the limits of the battleground.

The danger of another visitation of cholera is a good deal modified by our knowledge of the chief agent in its rapid diffusion. Many of our large cities have rendered themselves, as we may hope, "cholera proof" by providing a water supply from sources beyond the danger of infection. With the provision of a supply of absolutely pure drinking water, there would be little cause to fear any extensive development of the disease, even should it reach our shores. But such a supply as far as London is concerned is still to seek, and although something has been done to prevent our rivers from being made sewers of any longer, yet there are very few of them beyond reproach, and Father Thames is certainly not of the number.

The epidemics hitherto dealt with have had the character mostly of extreme virulence in the outset, with gradual diminution of force, due either to the weakening of the poison germ or the induration of the human tissue against its influence. But the epidemic of which everybody has lately been talking seems to act in a different way—coming in mildly enough, but increasing in severity as it goes on, and instead of hardening people against its further attacks, leaving them still more susceptible to that maleficent influence.

The prevalent epidemic is not fortunate enough to be without a history. Even if we are not allowed to claim the evidence of the Saxon Chronicle, and adduce the example of the year 1087—although sufferers from the complaint may recognise it by the description of "the worst evil

that is"—nor yet to fill up the blanks in the record by visitations which probably occurred, but which have escaped the notice of historians, we can still show a respectable antiquity for the infliction. The year 1510 begins the recorded series, which sets forth at Malta, where the epidemic set all the Knights of St. John coughing and sneezing, and so spreading, by aerial influence doubtless, over Europe, attacked everybody, inferentially giving a grip to Thomas Wolsey, not then a cardinal, and not sparing his Royal master, the young and chivalrous Harry. But the disease though widespread was mild, and it was only fatal to children.

The next date is 1557, when the influenza spread from Asia across Europe. This time it was more destructive, and probably carried off Queen Mary, who died in November, 1558, of what is described as a prevailing fever. The next visitation occurred in 1580, and was marked by still greater severity. The influenza, starting from Constantinople and Venice, spread over Hungary and Germany, Scandinavia and Russia. In Rome, nine thousand people died of the complaint, and Madrid was almost depopulated. In 1591, Germany was chiefly affected by the epidemic; but in 1675, England suffered a severe visitation, as again in 1688 and 1693, when the whole island of Great Britain was more or less affected.

The eighteenth century had more than its share of the distressing disorder. In 1729-30, it overran Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Germany. In Vienna, sixty thousand were attacked by the complaint, which reached England and France in the autumn. But still more severe was an outburst of the epidemic which reached Great Britain in December, 1733, and remained as an unwelcome guest till 1737. For the first time, brain symptoms predominated, and everywhere the aged, the consumptive, and others suffering from diseases of the respiratory organs, succumbed to the disease. Again we were invaded by the disease in 1737, and in 1762, and in 1775. In 1782, the disorder began in Russia, or was imported from the East, and raged with great severity. Extraordinary fluctuations of temperature marked its progress. Forty thousand people were attacked by it on one and the same day, and it struck with such rapidity that it earned the name of the "lightning cough." Then, as at the present day, the danger was of relapse, followed often by

pneumonia and inflammation. In 1788, the unfriendly visitor came again, and stayed till 1790.

A remarkable visitation was that of 1830, which spread over East and West, and in England preceded the terrible invasion of the cholera. Another influenza epidemic followed the disappearance of that pest, and reached London in 1837, when almost the whole population was attacked, and the mortality was great. Since then, up to the time of this present visitation, the disease has only shown itself in a mild sporadic form.

From the rapidity with which it spreads and its independence of commercial routes, lines of traffic, and geographical condition in general, it seems probable that the source of influenza is some abnormal condition of the atmosphere. It comes with the north and the north-east winds, and it may have some connection with the great volcanic disturbances of recent years in the Eastern seas; or it may be, as some suppose, that the air is infected by floods, and hundreds of thousands of the unburied corpses of those who perished by them in China; or we may have caught up some trifling thing in the way of a comet whose mephitic atmosphere has disagreed with us. Yet the probabilities seem to point to some regularly recurring cause, and if we once get over this, let us hope it may not recur again in our time.

SOME MAORI TRAITS.

WHEN Captain Cook visited New Zealand at the end of the last century, he found the Maories living in handsome abodes, well clothed with garments made of various native fabrics, navigating the lakes and coasts with elaborately decorated boats, and possessing a distinct civilisation, to the laws of which they yielded a ready obedience. In a word, they were a flourishing and populous people. The navigator's visits had but little effect upon them, if we except the introduction of a few plants and animals. Chief among the latter was the pig, which became known by the name of poaka—a sound nearest to the word pork—and which afterwards won a high place in their affections. Not only was its flesh most tempting to the Maori palate, but the animal itself became part of the family circle, being fondled and petted, and often carried about like a child.

Researches subsequently made have re-

vealed the fact that the Maories possess a mythology which compares in point of elaboration with those of Greece and Rome, and practise religious customs which, like those of the Kafirs of South Africa, seem to indicate a distant connection with the Egyptians.

In his recent visit to the antipodes, Mr. Froude found the condition of this interesting people changed for the worse. The partial adoption of Christianity and of European civilisation had not compensated them for the surrender of their national life. Not only had that frank enjoyment of mere physical existence — so characteristic of native peoples — disappeared, but their spirit had been cowed and their fruitfulness dried up. In a sense they have been killed by kindness. The care which has been displayed by the Colonial Government to prevent their being robbed of their inheritance by unscrupulous adventurers, has caused their tribes to become possessors of a wealth which they cannot usefully enjoy. It is said that one Maori tribe receives an annual revenue of twelve thousand pounds from a single block of land in the Napier district. Under such influences they have settled down into a hopeless indolence and an apathetic fatalism.

But the Maories have not been universally worsted in the process of subjugation. While the heavy public debt of the Colony testifies to their prowess in the field, not a few stories are current which show that they have sometimes conquered in the conflict of wits. Although the Maori belief in a single Superior Being, and the special doctrine of *Utu*, or payment for wrong, prepared them in a measure for the doctrines of the missionaries, they were keenly alive to the occasional inconsistencies of their teachers. In "Oceana" Mr. Froude tells a story of how a native chief, Tekoi by name, managed to turn the tables upon his instructor. Tekoi had been warned by the missionary against drinking fire-water, which, he was told, would destroy his property, his character, his health, and, worse still, his immortal soul. A day came, however, when the missionary, being in danger of catching cold, was himself constrained to have recourse to this same fire-water in the form of a glass of whisky toddy. At the moment when he was about to raise the tempting fluid to his lips, a dusky figure appeared, and a voice said: "Little Father, do not drink fire-

water. If you drink fire-water, Little Father, you will lose your property, you will lose your health, you will lose your character. Perhaps you will lose your life. Nay, Little Father, you will lose — But that shall not be. Your immortal soul is more precious than mine. The drink will hurt me less than it will hurt you. To save your soul I will drink it myself." Which he did forthwith.

In some cases conversion had a practical aim. A dusky worshipper, whose requests for blankets had at last elicited a decided refusal from the missionary, replied: "Kapai" (good); "no more blankets, no more hallelujahs," and thereupon returned to the faith of his fathers. No less humorous, though in another way, was the remark of a Maori who had claimed a piece of land, and had been asked to tell the court on what proof he relied for his title. Pointing to the rival claimant, he said, simply, "I ate his father."

In his business transactions with the pakehas, or colonists, the Maori relied especially on the "waiting" policy (*taihoa*). Many stories, illustrating this and other peculiarities of the Maori character, have been collected by an old colonist, Mr. Firth, and introduced into his interesting work on New Zealand, to which he has given the title of "Nation Making."

On one occasion, according to this authority, the late Sir Donald McLean was commissioned by the Colonial Government to purchase a large tract of land from a Maori chief. For three days Sir Donald remained the chief's guest. They rode, talked, ate, and smoked together. Each night the bags of gold containing part of the purchase money were solemnly handed over to the chief for safe keeping, and restored again to the commissioner's attendant in the morning. But not a word was said about the purchase of the land. On the third morning Sir Donald prepared to return. The horses were led round and farewells were exchanged.

"Go on your way in peace," said the chief.

"Dwell in safety in your village," replied the commissioner.

Then at last the Maori, beaten at his own game, gave in.

"Does not my friend know that I wish to sell the land? Why does he not speak about it?"

After that, of course, the business was soon settled.

A story like this prepares us for the

information that the Maories have taken very kindly to the game of chess, and that they make excellent players.

Like all primitive peoples, the Maories are very inquisitive, and, in the manner of children, are inclined to bring everything to their mouths to test its qualities. In the early days a party of Maories came across some bars of soap which had been washed ashore from a wreck. Finding that the stuff was too sticky to be eaten raw, they resolved to cook it. Accordingly they cut it up into small pieces and sprinkled these pieces over the sweet potatoes and fish which formed their evening meal. Finally, they covered the whole mass over with fern-leaves and mats, and, putting earth on the top, left everything to bake quietly in the ovens till the evening. The scene at that evening meal must have been very funny. Not only did the tribe have to go supperless to bed, but the whole set of ovens were spoilt, and new ones had to be constructed before any further cooking could be done.

It was this inquisitiveness which, according to Mr. Firth, led the Maories of the King Country to depart from the attitude of sulky isolation which they at first assumed after their final defeat by the Colonial forces. Having been brought by sheer curiosity into the white men's towns, friendly relations quickly grew up between the two races. Naturally the keepers of hotels and stores were only too pleased to welcome visitors whom they knew by former experience to be profitable customers. Sometimes the white men overdid it, and gave the Maories an opportunity for displaying that humour which is ready to appear at the slightest provocation. This happened when a number of chiefs, headed by the famous warrior named Rewi, visited the towns. They entered a store, where they were welcomed with effusion by the storekeeper.

"Very glad to see you, Rewi, and your Hauhaus"—using the tribal name—he said. "I am all the same as a Hauhaus myself."

Rewi smiled at the compliment, and proceeded to inspect the various goods, and lay aside the articles which he required. At last the purchases were complete, and the bill was presented.

"What is this?" said the Maori chief, in feigned astonishment.

He was told it was the bill.

"You said you were all the same as a Hauhaus. Very good." Then, with a

twinkle in his eye, "We Hauhaus have all things in common."

The storekeeper began to repent of his extreme politeness, and to wonder how he was to get out of the fix, when at length Rewi relieved him from his confusion by putting down the money, and the whole party left the shop in supreme enjoyment of the joke.

The Maories believed in the immortality of the soul long before the arrival of the missionaries; but the spirit land to which they imagined all men journeyed after death was as grossly material as the "happy hunting-grounds" of the North American Indians. Such a legend as the following, which contains an instance of singularly determined parental interference, is sufficient evidence of this. A young chief of high rank fell in love with a Maori maiden of great beauty, but of low degree. His father "forbade the banns." Thereupon the usual results followed. The young chief refused to eat, and died of hunger; the beautiful maiden, heart-broken at the death of her lover, leapt down from the cliffs into the sea in order that she might follow him. Now comes the extraordinary part of the story. The obdurate father, hearing of the girl's leap into the sea, rushed to the spot, battle-axe in hand. Using terrible language, he declared that he would prevent the union of the pair in the spirit land, and forthwith himself leapt down to follow them.

If this is a typical instance of the behaviour of a Maori parent of the old school, the Maori youth at the time of Captain Cook's visit must have been singularly well brought up. Mr. Froude does not say whether he noticed any falling off in this respect.

THE THIRTEENTH BRYDAIN.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "Catherine Maidment's Burden," "Benefit of Clergy," "Mr. Wingrove's Ways," "The Vicar's Aunt," "Dick's Wife," etc.

CHAPTER III.

IN the hall of the Great House of Brydain hung a long chart. It was hung in a somewhat dark corner, between a window and the passage which led to the servants' part of the house. But if it had been hung in the best light possible, it would still have been no easier to decipher than in its own abiding-place, it was

so cracked with age, and stained with dust and dirt of the past. It was on parchment or it must long since have fallen to bits, if not with age, with the energetic dusting Mackenzie bestowed upon it day by day—a dusting which he generally accompanied with a grim sigh. It was the chart that contained the Brydain family tree, first made out, as a small date and inscription in the lowest corner testified, by the order of a Brydain who lived in 1590, and continued by later hands down to 1852. The record it bore went back three centuries earlier than its first recorder's day, the earliest date in the chart being 1299. In that year a Brydain, whose Christian name was Robert, and who was further described in a Latin word or two as a "free-lance," had apparently grown tired of a roving life and settled down with a wife, Alice by name, in the fastness of Brydain. Whether he built the original Great House, of which bits of the masonry, incorporated in the present building, still defied wind, weather, and time, or whether he took by force another man's labour, there was no record to state; but at any rate, he there founded a family.

Of this family, and of its branches for the next hundred and fifty years or so, the accounts were dim and misty. The names of the sons were sometimes wanting, they being briefly set down here and there as "a son, died young; another son, killed at Flodden; a son, name unknown." As to the daughters, their names were few and far between, indeed; their number, and the fact of their existence, and marriage, or the reverse, being duly notified, they yet had but little individuality in the record that wandered through the cracks and stains of the yellow old chart. But on the direct line and the eldest son the chroniclers had carefully concentrated their energies. The latter seemed to have been always, with one or two exceptions, named Angus—a good old name that told of the true Scottish blood in the veins of the original "free-lance" founder.

As the years went on the record grew more and more coherent; the names were all given, daughters as well as sons, and every detail connected with them clearly given also. It went straight on, the line being carried on by long-lived fathers, and equally long-lived and apparently prosperous sons, until an Angus Brydain who died in 1650. After him the line broke rapidly, and went aside into

collateral branches in a way it had never done before. Under his name some long-gone hand had traced a thick but quivering red ink line, and with that red line the name of Angus came to an end. Not another son, during the two hundred years that were beneath it, bore the name, were he elder or younger. Roberts, Davids, Kenneths, Williams there were, but never another Angus.

As each Brydain succeeded in his turn he had added to the name of his predecessor the date of his death, and of his own consequent succession; and the last date so added was that of 1852. It had been added then to his uncle's name by David Brydain; and the time had now come when it must be added to his name, by his son and successor, Keith.

Keith Brydain had neither brother nor sister. He had never had either; he was an only son. His mother had died when he was little more than a year old. She had been a girl of seventeen only when David Brydain, during a professional visit to her father, a lawyer in Glasgow, had caught a glimpse of her running upstairs, and with that glimpse had fallen impetuously and passionately in love. Janet Ogilvie was very pretty. She had a slight, graceful figure; quantities of thick, waving, golden-brown hair; a laughing, rosy mouth; and deep blue eyes. But the pretty, slender form was a very fragile one, and when, after a year of passionate entreaties and unceasing wooing, David Brydain carried his bride, at eighteen, away to Brydain, she did not long live to brighten its grey gloom. The bitter air seemed too much for the delicate girl, or perhaps it was the change from her cheery home to the unconquerable dreariness of the Great House of Brydain. Whatever may have been the reason, the pretty young wife drooped and faded day by day, like a dying flower. She lived just long enough to hear her name distinctly pronounced by the child lips of the baby to whom she had given her own bright hair and deep blue eyes, and then she died, leaving the father and his tiny son alone together.

David Brydain was inconsolable for the loss of his pretty young wife for many and many a day. It was weeks before he roused himself at all; and when he at length, with a sudden effort at self-control, began all at once to take up his daily life again, his first act was to send for his little son. He had hardly noticed the child,

even when in his presence, hitherto, and the order he gave to Mackenzie to bring Keith to him seemed more as if he were impelled by a recollection of a neglected duty than by any longing to see the child. But when the boy came into the long dining-room, holding Mackenzie's hand, it suddenly seemed to the lonely Laird of Brydain that the baby figure might some day bring him comfort.

From that time David Brydain was rarely separated from his little son, and the boy was scarcely ever willingly away from his father. He accompanied the Laird everywhere. When he was small he was carried as often as not in his father's arms, and when he grew older he strode along beside him with steps that tried hard to be as long as the Laird's own. Together they tramped over moorland, heather, and rough hill, or up and down the little village street. "The Laird an' the bit laddie," were the most familiar sight in Brydain village.

Little less familiar, as time went on, was the sight of "the laddie and Mackenzie."

It would be difficult to define Mackenzie's exact position or duties in the household of the Laird of Brydain. He might have been with equal truth described as valet, steward, or balliff. He was too much of a servant to be spoken of as the Laird's "factor," and too much of a confidential friend to be ranked as a butler. The fact was that there were very few duties in and about the Great House, with the exception of what he contemptuously called "women's gear," that did not come within Mackenzie's range or under his supervision. When to all these other duties he added, as he said and thought, "the care o' the laddie," in public he lost no opportunity of descanting upon the extra trouble entailed on him by "the laddie"; while, in his secret heart, he loved the boy like his own son, and was jealous even of Keith's love for his father.

With the exception of three years spent at school in Glasgow, and two visits made since he had been grown up to his uncle in London, Keith's whole life had been spent at Brydain, in the companionship of these two. He had but few friends of his own age; but his life had been full and very happy, and the years had passed so uninterruptedly and so quietly that he had scarcely noticed their passing.

In the village of Brydain, every year as it passed had only made "the young Laird," whom the people had loved as a "laddie,"

more popular as a young man. From the sandy-haired little urchins who used to run after him in the street, to Elspeth, the oldest woman in Brydain, no man, woman, or child had anything but a good word for him; and to Keith, his popularity did nothing to spoil him; it simply gave the finishing touch to the simple contentment of his life. It was a blow all the heavier, because of the placid life on which it fell, when his father's death brought Keith his first great loss.

The Laird's death had come suddenly and unexpectedly. Riding home alone in the dusk of an April evening, a woman, with a white shawl thrown over her head, had come out of a gate at the side of the road, and had so startled the horse the Laird was riding as to make it swerve violently and throw its wholly unprepared rider. The result of the Laird's fall had seemed but slight at first, and he had declared that he should be "about again in a day or two."

But three days later Keith was telegraphing despairingly for the best medical aid, and by the end of the week the internal injuries which the Laird had sustained had proved fatal.

The accident which had led to such a tragic result had been apparently a simple one enough, and such the Laird, with what seemed unnecessary emphasis, asserted it to have been, on his death-bed. He was even inclined to add to its simplicity by abstracting from his previous narrative the figure of the woman who had, as he at first stated, frightened his horse.

The animal had shied, he now assured Keith, with feeble insistence, as horses will now and then, for no apparent reason.

But no assertion from the Laird was of any avail against the statement of the woman herself. By her, and by every other inhabitant of Brydain, the "accident" was viewed in a very different light. To them it was laden with all the horror of a destiny fulfilled and of a foreboding of an inexorable fate yet to come.

For to them the Laids of Brydain lived and died under the heavy shadow of a relentless doom.

That Angus Brydain, under whose name the quavering red line was drawn in the old chart; that Angus Brydain with whom the name of Angus died out of the family for ever, had been known in his own day, was alluded to even now by the villagers of Brydain, as they discussed in awestruck whispers the manner of David Brydain's death, as "the cursed Brydain."

In 1624, when the nationality of the King of England was still making London a happy hunting-ground for Scotsmen, Angus Brydain, a restless spirited young man of twenty-two, followed the example of many of his countrymen and went thither also. When he had been there some months he fell in love with a pretty English girl, the daughter of a rich City merchant. The pretty English girl lost her heart to the handsome Scotsman, and the preliminaries of their marriage were quickly arranged. It was to take place on a morning in June in one of the City churches. The bridegroom was there, and in due time the bride arrived. The ceremony was nearly over, Angus Brydain and Dorothy Mordaunt had been made husband and wife, when the heavy church door was suddenly thrown open, and a young woman in disordered Scottish dress, dark and tall, resisted all the efforts made to stop her, and made her way into the midst of the wedding-party. She turned her flashing black eyes full on Angus Brydain, who quailed beneath their glance, and then, with a mad intensity of tone and manner, beneath which the various attempts made to hush her sank into awe-struck silence, she hurled at him a terrible curse—a curse which she called on Heaven to seal.

As he had brought ruin on a woman, she said, so should that ruin by a woman be avenged. He himself should come to his death sooner or later, but surely by the hand of a woman. But the curse should not die with him who had invoked it. No Laird of Brydain hereafter should live out his natural span of life, but his end should be brought about by a woman's hand. On twelve generations this doom was to fall; with the thirteenth the curse culminated. To the thirteenth Brydain his wife was to bring his doom, and with him the race was to die out. Angus Brydain lived on for five-and-twenty years, and then, when the curse was almost forgotten, he was murdered by his own daughter. His son succeeded, to be in his turn stabbed by his mistress. With his death, following on that of his father within five years, the curse seemed to suddenly rise into an all-absorbing horror, and to darken the name of Brydain.

Through the generations that followed, down to David Brydain, who was the twelfth of the cursed Brydains, through defiance, superstition, and scepticism, as the spirit of the time dictated, there had

always been those who said that the curse held its own.

In one instance a laird who had just succeeded as a baby was killed by the carelessness of his nurse in letting him fall from her arms; in another, a young man in the prime of life was betrayed by a woman into the hands of his enemies. It was, in fact, a curious coincidence that in no case since the curse fell upon the house had womanly influence been absent from the death of a Laird of Brydain.

As the villagers of Brydain had whispered to one another in 1655, when the second of the cursed Brydains came to his end, they whispered now, when the twelfth—David Brydain—was laid in his grave, brought to his end by an accident of which a woman stood, self-confessed, the cause; and Keith, the thirteenth Brydain, was left to dree his weird alone.

CHAPTER IV.

"AND it's your new powder-flask you'll have ta'en, Brydain?"

The speaker was Mackenzie. He was standing on the threshold of the Great House, his hand resting on the latch of the half-opened front door. Brydain, dressed in a shooting suit, with his gun over his shoulder, was standing in the middle of the track, about a hundred yards away. His head was slightly turned over his shoulder towards the house, as if to hear clearly what Mackenzie had to say, but his foot played impatiently with a stone in the track, and he looked anxious to be allowed to set off.

"Yes, I've got the new one," he answered, tersely.

"That's well, man; for the auld ane scatters the powder like summer rain, and I saw it mysel'."

Brydain listened patiently to this comment, and, finding it required no answer, was preparing to walk briskly away, when Mackenzie's voice, raised higher, presumably to carry over the few extra steps Brydain had taken, arrested him once more.

"Brydain," he said, "you'll not have forgotten that my sister and the lass come to Brydain the nicht? I can be taking the cart to bring them hither from Carfrae Station?"

"Of course," shouted Brydain, in answer; and then, giving a little twist to his gun, to get it into a more comfortable position,

he strode quickly away over the moor, while Mackenzie swung the heavy door back to its latch and went back into the Great House.

Left suddenly alone in the world, by that slight accident which had so very different a result for the Laird to what he had imagined, Keith Brydain had given long and careful thought to his future life, and the result of that long and careful thought had been the determination of which he had told Mackenzie—the determination to go to London.

The Brydain estate was very small; it had been larger, but in the course of the last two or three centuries it had diminished considerably—whether by encroachments from outside, or by the sale of parts of it under pressure of necessity, there were no records to show. The income, however, was quite large enough to have kept Brydain at home in ease and comfort, or, indeed, to have kept him in idleness in London, if that had been his plan. But there were few responsibilities attached to the property, and Brydain could not by any means be said to be neglecting his duty in leaving it.

It was now a fortnight since the evening on which he had told Mackenzie of his plans. During this fortnight he had made every necessary arrangement for his departure. As the first and most important of these, he had written to his uncle, and had received from him a speedy and cordial invitation to his house, and promises of both help and advice in his future.

The many other arrangements that were necessary to be carried out Brydain had gone carefully through with Mackenzie. As a minor detail among them, Brydain had acted upon Mackenzie's suggestion about his sister-in-law. Finding her, on investigation, a very suitable person to be employed as caretaker, Brydain had engaged her readily enough, much to Mackenzie's satisfaction, and she and her young daughter were to arrive that evening. Brydain had also carefully set aside plenty of time for the leave-takings which had to be said in the village—leave-takings which had not been, by any means, rapidly to be accomplished. But now on Monday they were almost all done, and, with the exception of the packing of the few personal belongings he meant to take away, Brydain was prepared to start for London on Wednesday morning.

The expedition on which he had just set out was one he had planned as soon as he

formed his decision, but which, partly from pressure on his time, and partly from reluctance to undertake it, he had put off until this last day but one in his old home.

Nominally a long shooting expedition, it was in reality an informal good-bye to all the familiar spots in the neighbourhood.

Brydain was by no means of a sentimental turn of mind, and would have scorned the idea of taking a precise and definite farewell of all his favourite haunts. But there were many places, far and near, of which he felt, without definitely expressing it to himself, that they were too inextricably interwoven with all his life to be parted with lightly. There was the glen, where his father had taught him to take aim, and where, years afterwards, he had made the largest bag that had been heard of in or near Brydain. There was the pool, whence, with Mackenzie by his side, he had successfully landed his first salmon. There was the crest of a hill whence his father and he had, each unknown to the other, taken the same very difficult aim at a blackcock on the wing, which had been triumphantly discovered by Brydain to have fallen to his gun. There was the ridge of broad stones where he and his father had almost invariably taken their lunch together, when they had had a long morning's tramp over the heather. These, and a dozen other places like these, were those which Brydain could not leave for a new and different life, in which they would all be only a memory, without, as he expressed it mentally, "taking another look" at them each and all.

As he set out across the moor on this errand, his step was as energetic, as firm, and as purposeful as became a young man who was taking leave of his former life, and setting out shortly upon a new and untried phase.

But, either the "other look" of which he spoke at his old haunts had proved more depressing than he had thought possible, or the actual walking that his expedition required had been more than even his muscular frame could easily accomplish in one day, for, at seven o'clock, as he came back over the moor and came into sight of the Great House, Brydain's steps were slow; he carried his gun heavily; and on his face there was a curiously weary look. His mouth was very firm and set; but his blue eyes were rather sunken, and he was a little pale. His steps dragged more and more as he came nearer and nearer to the Great House, and his eyes were bent on

the ground. It was growing darker moment by moment, and the straggling pine-trees were moaning and creaking in the wind that had sprung up at sundown, but Brydain did not seem either to heed the dark or to hear the sound made by the pine-trees, even when he was quite close to them, and until, in cutting across a corner of the rough avenue, he brushed unexpectedly against the trunk of one of them, he hardly seemed to know that he had reached home.

Then, as if recalled to himself by the contact, he drew himself up and walked quickly up to the heavy entrance and let himself in.

The hall was in darkness. The one oil lamp that generally lit it, or, rather, made its dark shadows more visible, was not alight; and the door into the dining-room was shut—no ray of firelight from thence dispersed the gloom at all. Brydain, with a low exclamation of surprise, flung his powder-flask down on the floor, and, feeling for it with his outstretched hand, leant his gun against the wall. Then he groped his way to the dining-room door and opened it. There was no lamp there; no preparation for supper visible; and the fire consisted of two rapidly fading logs.

"What in the world is Mackenzie about?" said Brydain, impatiently, as he came out of the room without shutting the door, and crossed the hall hastily. He went towards the passage leading from it to the kitchens, in order to search there for Mackenzie. The passage was very long and narrow, paved with stone, and decorated on either wall with a curious mixture of things—foxes' heads and brushes, and stags' antlers at the end nearest the hall, and at the other end a collection of bright pewter dish-covers, the polish on which was alternately Mackenzie's pride and his despair.

As Brydain entered the passage he saw that the kitchen door, which was on the right side at the extreme end, was slightly ajar, for from it a narrow, bright streak of light came out, slanting all down the opposite wall, and making a sort of bright ribbon of light across the dish-covers which happened to be just in its line.

"Having his supper by the fire and neglecting his work," said Brydain to himself, wrathfully; and he walked very quickly down the passage towards the streak of light. He had almost reached the kitchen door, so nearly, indeed, that he was just going to stretch out his hand

to open it further, when he stopped short all at once:

For the thirteenth this doom shall wait,
He shall wed the bride who brings his fate.

The words came through the crack of the door in a low, almost whispered voice. It was Mackenzie's; but it was unnaturally hollow and awe-struck, and there was in it an indescribable conviction and foreboding. It was followed by an instant's dead silence—a silence and hush in which Brydain, as he stood pale and motionless, suddenly arrested in his hasty movements, seemed to be the only living creature in the gloom which suddenly dominated the homely surroundings of the passage.

It was only for an instant; the next, apparently with a strong reaction and a fierce imprecation utterly unlike his natural self, Brydain stepped forward and opened the door.

"Mackenzie——" he began, roughly; but he broke off and stepped back quickly.

The large, low room was lighted only by the blazing fire, and drawn close to the fire were three chairs, on one of which, with his back to the door, Mackenzie was seated. Opposite to him was a woman of about forty, with a broad, comfortable-looking figure and a still more comfortable-looking face. Her arms were folded and her eyes were fixed intently on Mackenzie. Between her and Mackenzie was the third chair and its occupant. This was a girl—a thin, slender girl, so small and short that, at first sight, she was certainly to be taken for a child of twelve or thirteen. A second glance showed that her very fair, almost colourless hair was fastened up in womanly fashion, and the great brown eyes, round, and intensely dreamy as they were, were not the eyes of a child. The clear bright glow of the fire seemed to fall more distinctly on her than on either of the other two, who were slightly in shadow, and it caught and outlined the blue-veined hands that were playing nervously with the trimming on her dark frock.

Mackenzie turned round hurriedly at the sound of his master's voice, and rising in great haste, pushed his chair back with a clatter.

"I—never expected you so soon," he said, confusedly; "I havena' prepared your supper. I was talking——" He broke off and turned awkwardly to the woman opposite, who had risen, as had the girl, at Brydain's entrance. "This is my brother's wife," he said, "Susan Macken-

zie; an' she'll do her duty by you, Brydain," he added, abruptly.

"I am sure of it," said Brydain, pleasantly, as Mrs. Mackenzie curtsied. "And this," he went on, glancing at the girl, "is your daughter, I suppose? I had forgotten, for the moment, that you were to arrive to-night."

The girl, without moving her eyes, curtsied also, but, before she could speak, Mackenzie went on:

"Ay, that's the lass; her name is Marjory; and you may trust I'll see she does some work for her keep. She's bonnier than she looks."

Mrs. Mackenzie looked a trifle embarrassed at this abrupt way of stating the case, and Brydain said, reassuringly:

"I think that will be all right. It has been understood from the first that you should have your daughter with you, Mrs. Mackenzie. I hope you will both rest well after your long journey. Mackenzie, I am quite ready for supper." And with a pleasant glance, Brydain went out of the kitchen.

He was followed by the same intent gaze of those great brown eyes. Marjory Mackenzie had watched Keith Brydain throughout the short colloquy with the same half-terrified, half-fascinated gaze which she had fixed upon him at his entrance. As he shut the door, she turned to her mother with a sort of gasp.

"That's not really him that Uncle Donald's been talking of, is it?" she said, breathlessly. "Him that has got to die?"

"We've all got to die," returned Mrs. Mackenzie, brusquely; and then, with an apprehensive look at the pantry, into which Mackenzie had disappeared, she added: "Your uncle talks of a deal more than he knows, perhaps. You help me with these tea-things, and never mind other people's affairs."

But the girl's face did not express agreement with this practical advice, nor did the frightened look die out of her eyes. It remained there, and on each of the few occasions on which she happened to catch sight of the young Laird during the next

day, it grew and intensified. These occasions were few indeed, for Brydain's last day in the Great House was very full of the many small details of packing, which had been left until then; but on each, unconscious as Brydain was of the fact, the girl could hardly take her eyes from his face and figure.

Wednesday morning broke gloomy and misty, with a fine driving rain, and Brydain, as he stood in the hall putting on his great-coat, shrugged his shoulders slightly at the weather that showed itself through the open door.

"You'll require to hurry, Brydain," said Mackenzie, coming into the hall from outside, where he had been putting his master's portmanteaux into the back of the dog-cart which stood waiting. "It's half after nine, and the fast train is aye punctual."

Mackenzie's manner was very brusque, and his voice was extremely gruff; but those were the only indications of emotion that he thought proper, apparently, to allow himself. There was, however, an odd convulsive twitch about the corners of his grim mouth, as Brydain, bareheaded, gazed round the hall as if he could not take his eyes away. All at once he snatched up his hat and gloves from the side table on which they laid.

"I'm ready, Mackenzie," he said, and went out of the great stone doorway.

He set his foot on the step of the dog-cart, and, as he did so, out of the mist of rain by which he was surrounded, there came a low, hoarse croak. Mackenzie, who had followed his master and was preparing to get into the dog-cart from the other side, stopped short with a face that was suddenly white with fear.

"Brydain, yon's an omen!" he said, in a low tone.

For an instant Brydain had paused, startled by the sound. Then he glanced up to where a raven was letting itself sway on one of the ragged pine branches, apparently to watch his departure, and sprang into the dog-cart.

"Don't be a fool!" he said, abruptly, as he whipped up the horse.

NOTE.

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